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ABSTRACT

The loss of the copula in Black English Vernacular (BEV) is demonstrably traceable to norms of pidginization that have their roots in West African languages and in contact among those languages. An extensive examination of the verb systems of a number of West African languages reveals that in every case a variety of verbal forms serves the many functions of the single verb "be" in English and that the particle verb grammar in these languages is morphologically complicated and wholly unlike verb grammar in English. The history of West Africa further reveals that prior to and during the period of slave trade there was extensive language contact among the various nations, resulting undoubtably in pidginization prior to arrival in the Americas. In light of these facts, it is possible to conclude that copula deletion has been in Black English dialect as part of its primary perceptual strategies and grammatical rules from the outset, and has occurred at so basic a level as to have become in all likelihood one of the covert norms of speakers of Black dialect to this day. However sociolinguistics may evaluate the casual style of BEV, from the perspective of language history copula loss may be viewed as inevitable. (JB)

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COPULA DELETION AND WEST AFRICAN LANGUAGES: A SOURCE FOR COVERT NORMS IN AMERICAN BLACK ENGLISH

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In his "Contraction, Deletion, and Inherent Variability of the English Copula" of 1972, William Labov proposed an elegant solution to the synchronic problem of copula loss in the Black English Vernacular (BEV). Yet his research, which shows that copula loss may occur as a morphological and ultimately syntactic result of the loss of contractions, leaves unexplored some other important sociolinguistic dimensions. In a recent paper (Donahue 1979) I have shown that in its casual style BEV is less fully de-creolized than its related West African English pidgins in the Caribbean; in fact, by actual mathematical measure, BEV has more in common with the redundancy loss of the non-West African English pidgins in the Pacific than it does with those descended from the Atlantic slave trade. This rather unsettling finding would seem to indicate that extra-linguistic, social reasons exist so that BEV speakers elect to speak with copula loss in the casual style. More precisely, copula deletion must be centered in a set of values that Labov terms elsewhere covert norms (Labov 1972b): BEV speakers may drop the copula as a sign of solidarity, straightforwardly alluding to that set of shared experiences that is unique to Blacks and the ways they have participated in American life.

One way of exploring the depth of these covert norms is to see if they have a traceable source in language history. Thanks to the work of William A. Stewart, Joey Lee Dillard, and others, linguists have long been familiar with the creolist hypothesis, which holds both

that BEV passed through a stage of pidginization in its early days, and that some few pidginized grammatical rules occur in BEV now. In fact, most creolists believe that copula loss is one such rule: see for example the summary in John Schumann's The Pidginization Process (1978). In this paper I would like to make the additional suggestion that in the case of BEV, copula loss gained an historical impetus in the earliest types of pidginized encounter between English and the major West African languages of the slave trade (Wolof, Mandinka, Ewe, Twi, Yoruba, Hausa, and Kongo--see Dalby 1970). To suggest that copula loss in modern BEV may in part originate in the grammar of West African languages involves, I admit at the outset, a centrally ahistorical assumption: we have to assume that certain grammatical rules in these languages have not changed much in 250 years. Yet the temptation to pursue this line of inquiry is quite strong, for if one investigates the hypothesis that the phonology of modern BEV preserves the structure of the same West African languages as a foreign accent, the results are both surprising and convincing (see Donahue 1978).

When we examine the history of West Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries,[1] we find that there is an extreme likelihood that those individuals who were to end up as slaves in the United States spoke pidginized varieties of one or more of the major West African languages in Dalby's list. We know certainly that at a later time, when the slave trade was winding down in the mid-1800s, there was a great diversity of languages and language backgrounds among the people recaptured and landed in Sierra Leone by the British navy: Sigismund

Koelle's Polyglotta Africana lists over 160 different languages spoken by people intercepted on slave ships sailing from the Senegambia, Sierra Leone, Bight of Benin, Congo, and Southeastern African regions. This multiplicity of languages in the 1800s slave trade may have been unusual, for as Philip Curtin notes, "the last burst of the Atlantic slave trade may have reached for new sources deeper in the interior than ever before" (Curtin 1969:252). Yet there is other evidence that people from a vast variety of language backgrounds were affected by the slave trade from the 1500s through the 1700s. The trade relations established by the Mande people on east to west routes in the southerly arid regions of West Africa involved slave-selling among multilinguals earlier than the 17th century. J. D. Fage quotes a source which suggests that Yoruba was the "lingua franca of trade" (Fage 1978:282) along those trade routes passing southwest out of the Hausa lands toward the Niger delta; but it is probable that merchants moving in this area would have to know Hausa, and probably Nupe also at the very least. Those slaves imported in the 1570s by the Portuguese from the Bight of Benin to work the gold fields in the Akan region would doubtless know some of the pidgin Portuguese of the coast and a pidginized variety of Twi as well. As the slave trade developed along the Gold and Slave Coasts, the local African merchants may have added pidginized forms of Dutch, Swedish, Danish, or German to their use of Portuguese and English (Fage 1969:74). When the major inland kingdoms developed economic and military power in the 17th and 18th centuries, they moved slaves from their northern hinterlands through the forests to the south coasts: the Akan, for

example, captured people from the northwest, and these prisoners, speaking Dagomba, Mamprusi, or Mossi as a first language, would pick up a pidginized variety of Twi in the early days of slavery. When the king of Benin at first refused to participate in the slave trade, a result was that the neighboring kingdom of Oyo in time grew more aggressive and waged war south to the coast; the prisoners of war would have learned a pidgin Yoruba. When the neighboring kingdom of Dahomey entered the slave trade in the mid-18th century, their prisoners would have learned a pidgin Ewe.

The importance of these facts for linguistic history is that we must acknowledge that most slaves were exposed to a variety of pidginized language forms before they came to the Western hemisphere. They would thus very likely have approached the major western European language to be learned in their adult lives with a set of language acquisition strategies quite unlike those characterizing language contact anywhere else in the world: specifically, they brought with them language experiences involving <u>multiple pidginization</u>.[2] It is difficult for us now to characterize the particular rules which must have developed in such a language encounter situation. We can say at the very least, however, that each kind of morphological and syntactic shortcut that develops when a pidgin evolves from the contact of only one language with one other would be solidly established in rule-governed behavior when an adult learns a new language from a background of multiple pidginization. Thus rule simplification and redundancy reduction would be basic in the kinds of grammatical inference which the slaves used in learning English.

Given the fact of multiple pidginization, it is possible to arrive at a weighted estimate of the specific West African languages and the general influence of each as these arrived in America in the early 18th century. From the figures developed by Philip D. Curtin on American slaves only (see Curtin p. 157) I have concluded that a small proportion of exported slaves spoke Mandinka as a first language; a slightly larger proportion may have spoken Wolof and Ewe as a first language; a still larger proportion may have spoken Kongo as a first language; and the largest proportion of all spoke Twi, Hausa, or Yoruba as first, second or third languages. For our purpose, then, I will assume that in decreasing order of importance, the West African languages providing input to an early West African/English koiné were Twi first, then Yoruba, Hausa, Kongo, Wolof, Ewe, and Mandinka.

Let us move to the specific task at hand. Our investigations of copula forms must center around two sets of questions: first--is there an equivalent structure for the English verb "be" in the West African language in question? If not, how are the forms semantically different? Would there be any predictable translation problems in bringing the West African forms into English? Second--are there major syntactic or morphological differences between English and the West African forms? If so, what general kinds of grammatical loss would have occurred through structural simplification or redundancy reduction as the English/West African language koiné first took shape?

The scholarship of Professor William Welmers provides a context for answering the first set of questions. In his work on Twi,

Yoruba, and Ewe, among other West African tongues, Welmers found that these languages do not have precise counterparts of the English verb "be" (Welmers 1973:309). Instead, commonly in the Niger-Congo group of languages one finds a variety of predications that express "identification, description, location, and possession," (Welmers, p. 309) and in any given case a language may combine two of these predications to form an equivalent of the English copula.

In Twi, thus, there is no form which is directly translatable into English as "be." Instead, there are verbal forms like /ni/ which means "be identical with" or /wo/, which translates as "be located at" (Welmers 1946:54). Twi has a major class of stative verbs, and in translating these into English, we supply a form of "be" with a predicate adjective; yet in Twi the verb and the adjective are combined in one word (p. 54):

yi'e = (be) good
mu'o' = (be) bad
sū' = (be) large
ye = be described as

Another class of verbs in Twi has a case relationship with the sentence subject that may be described as "Actor-Action" (Welmers 1946:60); we translate these into English with a form of "be" even though no copula occurs in the original (p. 60):

maáfùná I'm tired.
waábin ma He's very clever.
adi'bán ábin The food is done.

Similarly, the "Actor-Action-Goal" case sequence will have a translation with "be," but no copula in Twi (p. 61):

mí-kirá díì má-akí'r	I was lucky.
waábò dú abí'èn	It's 12 o'clock.

In all these instances we see verb grammar which naturally comes into English without a copula "be."

Like Hausa, Twi also has verb particles which convey information about point of time and duration of time; other forms indicate direction of motion, continuous action, and relation to the speaker; and one stative verb form, /wo/, when used with an active verb, translates as "be located at" (Welmers 1946:64). As in the case with Hausa, one gains the impression that invariant be--when it occurred in the Black English koiné at all--may have been a surviving particle verb form.[3]

In Yoruba, there is also no verb for "be"; instead the particle /ni/ serves both to identify and describe:

ilé ni	It's a house. (Welmers 1973:314)

The verb /wa/ serves a similar identification and, in addition, a location function:

ó wà n' í bé	He is there (Welmers 1973:314)
igi kón wà	Tree one exists (Bamgbose, p. 32)
owó wà	Money exists (Bamgbose, p. 32-33)

There is no verb form in Yoruba between a subject and a predicate adjective:

asó tuntun	Cloth new (Bamgbose, p. 34)

Additionally, the forms often translated as "is" do not serve a directly perceivable copula function in English. The morpheme /ko/ occurs in negative statements:

owó kọ́	Money (is) not (Bamgbose, p. 37)

and the morpheme /lǒ/ connects subordinate predicates to a subject (Bamgbose, p. 37):

iyen lǒ lọmọ That one + (is he) owns child.

The examples above do not exhaust the structures in Yoruba which might be translated with "be" in English. One linguist, in fact, lists eleven verbs "which express existence both absolutely and in various relations": dì, gbé, yé, li(ni), ḿbe, mi, rí, se, wà, and ya (Ogunbowale, p. 41). The basic problem, however, is that the linear verb structure is immensely complicated in Yoruba; according to Bamgbose, it would look like this: (verbal particle) + [pre-verb] + (verbal particle) + $\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{[bound verb]}\\\text{[free verb]}\end{matrix}\right\}$ + (verbal particle) + $\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{[free verb]}\\\text{[bound verb]}\end{matrix}\right\}$ + (verbal particle) + [post verb] (after Bamgbose, p. 67). When a language has at least eleven different copula-like sources, as well as twenty combinations for aspectual differences (perfective as opposed to simple, with particles expressing future, conditional past, continuous, habitual, and "unmarked" distinctions (Bamgbose, p. 941)), it is very probable that forms from such a language would be reduced to simple-particle, or even missing-copula, expressions if these were available elsewhere in the developing koiné.

In Hausa also there is "not single equivalent of the English verb 'be'" (Cowan and Schuh, p. 47). Statements which mean "He is my teacher," "That is a book," and "We are students," are formed <u>without</u> verbs at all; instead an identifying particle /nē/ for masculine or /cē/ for feminine is placed at the end of a sentence to point out that

the subject is here or that it exists. Cowan and Schuh give the following examples (p. 47):

shī Ạudù nē	He is Audu.
nī cę̀	It's me. (woman speaking)
nī nē	It's me. (man speaking)

Similarly, no verb "be" exists in Hausa as a counterpart to English questions like "What is it?", or "What is this?", or for statements like "Here they are" or "There he is"; the nonverb /nē/ is used in the first two structures and the preposed article /ga/ serves in the last two (Cowan and Schuh, p. 48):

mę̀nē nę̀	What is it?
mę̄nē nē wannàn	What is this?
gą̄ su nân	Here they are.
gā shi cân	There he is.

In other instances, the copula function occurs in the form, not of a verb, but instead of a morpheme called the "continuative pronoun" (p. 69): in an utterance like "I am here," the meaning of "am + here" is given in the pronoun /nân/:

inà nân	I am here.
anā nân	One is here.

We must also observe that, as in Yoruba, there would be no direct English equivalent in Hausa of a structure like NP (subject) + copula + Predicate Adjective; there is in Hausa, however, the additional complication that one speaks of attributes through predicate nouns. Cowan and Schuh note that "Hausa has very few adjectives," and hence we see that attributes here also are <u>possessed</u> through "large numbers of nouns expressing qualities" (Cowan and Schuh, p. 166).

We may note the following examples (Cowan and Schuh, pp. 69-70):

girmā	bigness
bishiyà tanà dà girmā	The tree is big. (The tree has bigness.)
ƙarfī	strength
audù yanà dà ƙarfī	Audu is strong. (Audu has strength.)

In other instances, an equative function in English is expressed with the verb /yi/ ("do" in English; see Cowan and Schuh, p. 166):

yārinyà tā yi kyâu	The girl is pretty (did beauty).
mutàne sun yi yawà	There are a lot of people (people did abundance).

Thus it would appear that the metaphorical

audù yá yi tsatse	Audu is grass

really translates as:

Audu did grass.

Additionally, to show that a thing exists, one uses /àkwai/ for the positive and /bābù/ for the negative (Kroft and Kroft, p. 214):

àkwai aikì	There is work.
bābu àbinci	There is no food.

We see at the outset that the three major West African languages in the slave trade have such grammatically and lexically complicated verb forms that drastic simplication would occur as these languages encountered each other, and of course English as well, during pidginization.

With Kongo, too, we are confronted with the fact that our English language uses of "be" are diverse and complicated. There are two main verbs meaning "to be": /kala/ has an imperfective aspect

connotation and is used to mean "to be habitually or generally" (Bentley, p. 690); /na/ has a perfective connotation and means "to be at a certain time" (Bentley, p. 691). We find a number of complications: /kala/ also means "to exist, to live, to live in or at, to be at or in, or to reside," (Bentley, p. 690) and /kala/ and /na/ also mean "to have" (Bentley, p. 691). Additionally, as in Hausa, "to be" may be expressed by an identifying particle (/i/). To indicate a change of condition from past to present, Kongo uses the particle /se/: something which formerly was bad but now has changed to the good will be expressed by:

se yambote — They are (now) good. (Bentley, p. 416)

With pronoun subjects, a number-specific form is attached to the subject to indicate "to be":

yeto twa mfumu — We are the chief. (Bentley, p. 17)

Further, in statements expressing a quality of excess, the copula is deleted entirely and the predicate adjective takes on the declensional vowel of the subject:

e mbele yayi ineni. — This knife (is) too large. (Bentley, p. 557)

Generally speaking, Kongo shows a structure characterized by what Welmers calls "morphemically complex verbal bases" (Welmers 1973, p. 329). A formula representing the sequence of verb morphemes is nearly as complicated as that for Yoruba: ([pre prefix]) + [concord prefix] + [pre-radical tense sign] + ([object infix]) + [verbal radical] + $\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{[final vowel]} \\ \text{[perfect suffix]}\end{matrix}\right\}$ + [continuative suffix]. (Carter, pp. 308-312). When we consider that Kongo may have had a pidginized form

before it entered the West African/English koiné, we see that its multiple verbal morphology is quite susceptible to simplification.

In Wolof, the equivalents for the English language "be" have an extraordinarily varied grammar. When the principal form, /nekk/, occurs, it may be translated as "generally parallel to some use of "be" in English (Stewart, III-21); /nekk/ or its shorter form /ne/ occurs in sentences with adverbial expressions, in present-time, past, and future statements, "in present-time questions, and in certain subordinate clauses" (Stewart, III-21):[4]

"Ku fi nekk?"	Who is here?
"Nyu nekkoon tyi nawet gi."	We were in the rainy season.
"Bu subaa di nï ny· fi nekk."	We'll be here tomorrow.
"Nyaati kïr-ï ne tyi boor yi."	"How many houses are around here?

If, however, a connection is made between a subject pronoun and a predicate noun, the form /lï/ is used:

"Nyun, wolot lï nyu."	We are Wolofs. (Stewart, II-36)

Further, /lï/ may be used for emphasis:

"Dakaar, dïkk li."	Dakar, a city it is. (Stewart, II-36)

Thus /lï/ serves in Welmers' sense, as an identifier. The form /am/, which ordinarily indicates possession, also attests to the truth of Welmers' interpretive scheme, for it may serve as a copula:

"Am ni fan weer li bïy tyi tool bi."	There are thirty sheep in the field. (Stewart, III-16)

But, to repeat a phrase, there are complications. In other cases, a basic equivalence with "to be" is set up through a nonverbal particle, /-inggi/, which Stewart terms a "presentative." No copula exists, then, in statements like:

"Kir-inggi"	House here.
"Mi-inggi"	I here.
	(Stewart, I-22)

Further, since Wolof has very few adjectives, descriptive attributes which in English are attached to the subject through a participle or a predicate adjective are handled in Wolof with the presentative.

"Mu-nggi wah"	He is speaking.
	(Stewart, II-23)

In other cases, predicated attributes are expressed with stative verbs; there is no copula in such a construction, but there is instead a "completive marker," /ni/:

"Baah ni nyu"	They [are] good.
"Riy ni"	It [is] big.

In still other situations, /ni/ occurs with "impersonal verbs," which lack subjects:

"Tangg ni"	[It is] hot.
"Naady ni"	[It is] sunny.
	(Stewart, V-4)

Thus in Wolof we see not only that there is a large range of copula substitutes in a translation in English, but also that there are numerous structures with no copula at all. Further, as in every other case discussed so far, the very complexity and variety of forms in the verbal morphology of Wolof shows a susceptibility to simplification, reduction, and loss in pidginization.

In Ewe, we find only slightly fewer complications. As is the case in Mandinka, there is a variety of forms meaning "to be," but that variety is not so semantically full and wide-ranging. Westermann (1930) discussed only five forms (nyé, le, li, du, and di) and of these /nyé/ occurs by far the most frequently (compare Warburton, pp. 56ff). As in English, the Ewe copula /nyé/ joins two noun phrases; but unlike English-language structure, /nyé/ is transitive:

lɔ́ énye tɔ melã̀	The crocodile is an animal that lives in the water. (Westermann, p. 91)
kofi ney sukûvi	Kofi is a student. (Warburton, p. 51)

The next form, /le/, is used to relate a noun phrase subject to a condition, quality, place or time:

élè nyuíe	He is well.
élè afî	He is here.
élè xɔ me	He is in the house. (Westermann, p. 91)

If the copula in Ewe refers only to the fact that a thing is present or it exists, the proper verb is /li/:

Máwu li	There is a God. (Westermann, p. 92)

We must note in confirmation of Welmers' analysis that both /le/ and /li/ may be used to indicate possession (referring directly to oneself):

ta le nám	I have a head.
hě le ɣuńyè	I have a knife with me. (Westermann, p. 94)

Next, if the copula refers to exercising a function or holding an office, the correct form is /du/:

du nṹfiala	[He] is a teacher. (Westermann, p. 92)

Lastly, the morpheme /wɔ/ is used with substantives to express an adjec-

tival relation. Westermann notes the following (p. 93):

wɔ kĕ	(to make sand)	=	to be sandy
wɔ fé	(to make dirt)	=	to be dirty
wɔ dzi	(to make courage)	=	to be courageous

In general, then, we see that in Ewe also there are quite different forms expressing the many and varied functions in the single English copula "to be."

In Mandinka, the last of the major languages entering the West African/English koiné during the slave trade, the principal positive copula form is /mu/ and its negative suppletive version is /te/ or /nte/ (Rowlands, p. 93). These verbs must be used between a NP subject and a following predicate NP:

Màndinkoo lɛ mu	He/she is a Mandinka.
Sànoo te, kodoo le mu (Rowlands, p. 93)	It is not gold, it is silver.

Other forms are used to refer to existence or non-existence, or to a place or a condition: for this the positive copula is, tantalizingly enough, /be/ or /bi/, and the negative is /te/ or /tí/:

héera be	There is well-being.
a tí jàng	He is not here. (Rowlands, p. 95)

As we have seen elsewhere, there are complications in the multiplicity of forms for the copula in Mandinka also. To connect a noun with an attribute, one uses /ye/:

o tu ndaga-le nye	It was permitted. (Delafosse, p. 233)

In a demonstrative connotation, one uses /do/:

ku-ntigi o do	That is the chief. (Delafosse, p. 233)

To emphasize an attribute inherent in the subject, one uses /le/:

a bana-to le	He is sick. (Delafosse, p. 234)

If that emphasized attribute occurred in the past, the proper form is /tèrè/:

a tèrè ku-ntigi	He was chief. (Delafosse, p. 236)

If the subject is abstract, or if it refers to an event, one uses the word /kǒ/:

o kǒ-ra su-ra	That happened in the night. (Delafosse, p. 237)

Then, in Welmers' sense, to identify a given noun, the proper form is /ferè/:

muso ferè	[Here] is a woman. (Delafosse, p. 238)

If the copula emphasizes the fact that there has been a change of state or condition, the correct morpheme is /ké/:

o kyè kè-ra fasa-ma-ye	That man is [now] poor. (Delafosse, p. 239)

Thus we see that there are different forms in Mandinka for most of the various connotations of the English verb "be," and, as the grammar of Maurice Delafosse emphasizes, we must recognize that these forms are modified with additional verbal particles to express perfect as opposed to imperfect senses (p. 239, e.g.). Although the verb grammar is not as complex as that of Yoruba or Kongo, there are nevertheless many "verb operators" (Rowlands, p. 2) which express mood, tense, and aspect (Rowlands treats eight positive and four suppletive negative forms;

see Chapter VIII). In a language undergoing pidginization with other West African languages and with English as well, this great diversity of forms would be highly susceptible to reduction and loss. In these particular pidginization encounters, there would be a substantial drawback with what is known in information theory as multiplex transmission: in this case, when a number of complex messages move on the same channel, there will be loss of structure.

In summing up the meaning for pidginization processes in our look at these pieces of grammatical structure, we must deal primarily with the historical fact that each of these major West African languages in all probability had been pidginized at least once before the speakers were exposed to English. Warfare and the slave economy of the time produced a basic sociolinguistic dislocation such that Yoruba, Hausa, and the rest must have undergone substantial simplification and redundancy reduction in the very West African input to the developing koiné. Then, in the most general linguistic terms, each of these languages has a grammatical structure for the copula that proves extremely susceptible to simplification: with a predominantly morphemically-complex particle verb structure, each copula has a rich variety of different forms, so that every connotation of the English language "to be" has a different grammatical structure and morphological representation. Again, generally, a violent era does violence to language: during enslavement in West Africa the copula grammars conflated and coalesced, so that forms and structure also were lost.

Yet it is in the specific comparison with English that the

differences in copula structure are most intriguing. In the first place, the particle verb grammar in these languages (especially in Yoruba and Kongo) is morphologically complicated and wholly unlike verb grammar in English. In many instances, there is either no verb exactly like "be" or no verb for "be" at all--and in this last case we have copula deletion at the outset. When verbs serving a copula function do exist, they often have something other than an equative meaning: they identify, or locate, or show possession, or emphasize attributes, or show status, or indicate change of condition, or refer to a completed quality in time, or imply a transitive relationship. If the various semantic possibilities were to be translated directly, they would range among "be," "exists," "lives," "becomes," "has," "equals," "shows," "means," "relates to," "develops emphatically," "has been but is now," and "look here at this," among many others. To examine these differences is to realize generally that in the act of taking slaves in the 17th and 18th centuries our forebears provoked structural clashes in those languages that they pushed together by force. But a closer look reveals that with their particle verb structure the West African languages were as a group particularly susceptible--moreso than most--to structure loss and to copula-deletion specifically. It is this basic susceptibility and vulnerability of the West African verb systems that we must acknowledge when we look at copula loss in American Black English today: copula deletion has been in that dialect as part of its primary perceptual strategies and grammatical rules from the outset, and thus has occurred at so basic a level as to have become in all likelihood one of the covert norms of

speakers of Black dialect to this very day. We may conclude then from the perspective of language history that copula loss is inevitable in the casual style of modern American Black English.

NOTES

[1]This discussion is drawn from the presentation of facts in J. D. Fage 1969 and 1978a.

[2]The historical facts show that in all likelihood speakers of Ewe, Twi, and Yoruba enslaved speakers of other West African languages, and it is valid to speculate that the enslaved people in turn developed and acquired pidginized varieties of Ewe, Twi, and Yoruba. In 1971 Sidney Mintz listed seven socio-historical characteristics for the development of pidginization (and then creolization) in the plantation economy of the Caribbean; of those seven, we may speculate that the following five applied in the political economy of West Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

(1) There were two different population groups involved;

(2) the enslaved group was "socially subordinate" and may have"included native speakers of two or more languages";

(3) conditions prevailed under which "the dominant group initiat[ed] the speaking of a pidgin that [became] common to both groups."

(4) There was probably "no established continuum including both the pidgin and the native language of the dominant group" and

(5) "the subordinate group [could not] maintain its original languages, either because the numbers of speakers of any one of its languages [were] insufficient, or because social conditions militat[ed] against such perpetuation , or both." (See Mintz, pages 493-94.)

In any event, it does not seem altogether too adventurous to assume that if in their initial language encounter situations enslaved peoples spoke pidginized varieties of dominant languages in this hemisphere they in all likelihood did the same thing in West Africa as well.

[3]For a much briefer discussion of the copula in Twi and Yoruba, see the discussion in Alleyne (1980), pp. 165-66. Alleyne also treats preverbal particles on pp. 162-65, and serial verbs on pp. 167-171.

[4]The upper case letters in the spelling of the Wolof examples preserve Stewart's orthography, and in this spirit I have decided to present in quotation marks all the material taken from his text.

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